HOW DO YOU CREATE LASTING ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE? YOU MUST FIRST SLAY GRENDEL'S MOTHER

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ABSTRACT

The study and successful application of organizational change strategies is assuming an increasingly timely relevance in this era of rapid change and increased pressures for competitiveness. Organizational change, whether focused on people, structure, processes, or technology, is inextricably linked with culture change. Much of the practitioner-oriented literature on organizational change treats culture as a tool that can be controlled, manipulated, and integrated by a senior management team and consultants. This paper draws upon lessons learned from cultural anthropology and organizational theory and offers a more complex view that takes into account the strength of organizational subcultures. A framework is presented for creating lasting organizational change that incorporates an appreciation for chaos theory. Secondly, the underlying organizational dynamics that defeat planned change efforts are examined through the unique perspective of Grendel's mother (from the Old English prose poem, "Beowulf"). Grendel's mother provides a provocative image to heighten awareness of the dynamics of organizational life that defeat change efforts.

The role of the change agent is explored as Beowulf with a 'realpolitik' perspective. Two examples from organization development fieldwork (a failed effort and a successful change program) illustrate the power of chaos theory, the force of Grendel's mother, and the role of Beowulf in planned change programs. By combining theory and practice, this paper seeks to facilitate the dialogue between academics and practitioners about creating lasting organizational change.

INTRODUCTION

Given the twin pressures of rapid technological change and the need for organizations to "turn on a dime" to best position themselves for regional, national, and global competitiveness, the study and successful application of organizational change strategies is assuming an increasingly timely relevance. There is an ongoing need for dialogue between academics and practitioners to better understand the paradigms and strategies that produce lasting organizational change. It is also important to understand organizational dynamics-in-action, including the individual and collective manifestations of resistance to change that often defeat planned change efforts. By combining theory and practice, this paper seeks to facilitate a dialogue between academics and practitioners to explore ways of creating lasting change that enhance organizational effectiveness and competitiveness in the marketplace.

In the process of looking at organizational change, this paper challenges some accepted notions in the management/leadership literature about organizational change. Organizational change, whether focused on people, structure, processes, or technology, is inextricably linked with culture change. Much of the practitioner-oriented literature on organizational change treats culture as a tool that can be controlled, manipulated, and integrated by a senior management team and consultants. Given the rich scholarly knowledge about organizational change, the advice about creating lasting change by using the handle of corporate culture is simplistic and misleading. This paper offers a more complex view, supported by organizational theorists and cultural anthropologists, that acknowledges the strength of organizational subcultures and resistance to change.

A framework is offered for creating lasting organizational change that incorporates an appreciation for chaos theory. While it is a powerful framework, it does not guarantee success. The underlying organizational dynamics that can defeat planned change efforts are examined through the perspective of Grendel's mother (from the Old English prose poem, "Beowulf"). Grendel's mother provides a provocative image to heighten awareness: she is the mother of all

negative attitudes and behaviors toward change that are manifested as fear and resistance. Next, the role of the change agent is explored as Beowulf with a 'realpolitik' perspective, while taking into account the importance of appreciating chaos theory in planned change programs. Two examples from organization development fieldwork (a failed effort and a successful change program) are used to illustrate the importance of working with the power of chaos theory rather than forcing an integrated culture perspective, while reckoning with the force of Grendel's mother, and assuming the role of Beowulf in planned change efforts.

LEADERS, SEERS, AND SNAKE OIL PEDDLERS OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE: CAUTIONS FROM CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGISTS

In the 1980s, the high level of interest in organizational culture was precipitated in part by the growing awareness of Japan, Inc. and its perceived culture of productivity. Ever since, American business has regarded the intentional development of organizational culture as a powerful weapon in the struggle for competitive advantage. This need to consciously develop organizational culture has proved to be fertile ground for management theorists and consultants (for a recent example, see Ashkanasy et al., 2000, who provide a 100-page bibliography).

While the explanatory power of organizational culture is very useful in understanding the evolution, successes and failures of planned change efforts, serious flaws have been identified in the basic assumptions that pervade the management literature about how organizational cultures can be created or altered. Martin defined three theoretical views of cultures in organizations: integration, differentiation, and fragmentation; however, "most empirical studies of cultures in organizations adopt one (or, rarely, two) of these three theoretical perspectives" (2002, p. 95; see also Martin, 1992, for extensive literature reviews). The management/practitioner literature has seized primarily on the integration perspective which focuses on those manifestations of a culture that have mutually consistent interpretations; i.e. a strong culture is like a "solid monolith that is seen the same way by most people, no matter from which angle they view it" (Martin, 2002, p. 94).

In a culture integration study, deviations from consistency, organization-wide consensus, and clarity are seen as problems and portrayed as "regrettable short-falls from an integrated ideal" for which remedies are sometimes proposed (Martin, 2002, p. 99). Martin (2002, p. 100) cites a number of predominantly integration-oriented reviews of the organizational culture literature, including:

Denison (1990), Ebers (1995), Kotter and Heskett (1992), Ouchi and Wilkins (1985), Schein (1999), and Schultz and Hatch (1996).

Many companies that invested in the development of a "strong" integrated culture to pursue productivity and profitability have been disappointed.

Despite these failings, the promise of a leader-centered, unified culture as a key to financial performance has kept its allure, particularly but not exclusively in the United States (Martin, 2002, p. 8).

The conventional wisdom of this approach to organizational change holds that to effectively create a new culture, the senior management team must become a powerful, guiding coalition in order to develop a picture of the future, which is then communicated throughout the organization (Cameron & Quinn, 1999; Ulrich et al., 1999). Once this new vision is in place, employees are emboldened and empowered, as long as their actions fit within the given parameters of the new culture.

Martin calls this a "Lazarus of an idea": the new presentation of this idea purports that with the "right corporate vision, mission statement, or leader, an organization can build a highly committed, unified culture that fosters productivity and profitability" (Martin, 2002, p. 9). However, as Martin then points out, the evidence on balance does not support these contentions. Furthermore, she states:

... the purpose of a social science theory is not to comfort managers with promises of relatively easy solutions but to capture and perhaps even construct organizational experiences, in all their discomforting complexity, conflict, ambiguity, and flux (Martin, 2002, p. 9).

Cultural anthropologists have similarly cautioned us that seeking to create and then maintain some sort of "correct culture homeostasis" is an illusory goal and that 'how to' primers on managing corporate culture are so much snake oil. Cultural anthropologists also fundamentally disagree with the implication that organizational cultures can be planned, manipulated and controlled. This is a form of ethnocentrism that Baba (1989) describes as "managementcentric." She suggests that it is appropriate to view much of the organizational change literature as reflecting only the voice of the occupational subculture of managers, a voice that seems to imply that management efforts to create and control organizational ideology equal the very creation of organizational culture.

The *differentiation perspective* "focuses on cultural manifestations that have inconsistent interpretations" (Martin, 2002, p. 94). The organizational consensus that does exist is found at the level of subcultures, which may exist in harmony, independently, or in conflict with each other. The *fragmentation perspective* regards cultural manifestations as inherently ambiguous, hence, "placing ambiguity, rather than clarity, at the core of culture" (Martin, 2002, p. 94). The

differentiation and fragmentation perspectives, which are value-neutral, are the views most compatible with those of cultural anthropologists since they turned their attention to the anthropology of work (Sachs, 1989).

Cultural anthropologists remind us to consider organizations as 'complex societies writ small' (Baba, 1989) because it sharpens recognition that management efforts do not equate with a holistic, integrated organizational culture and probably never will. Modern formal organizations have evolved as turbulent, multicultural, and heterogeneous, and in the extreme, as a patchwork highly diverse social environment (Baba, 1989). Viewed from this perspective, organizations are far too complex for rational socio-technical models of maintenance and manipulation, and it is a daunting task to integrate ideas, attitudes, and behaviors across all of an organization's many diverse subgroups. Schein acknowledged the difficulty of this task when he said:

Creating a climate of teamwork and openness is a common goal nowadays, but it is the rare company that figures out how cultural assumptions about individualism, about managerial prerogatives, and about respect for authority based on past success may make teamwork and openness virtually impossible (2000, pp. xxiii–xxiv).

A PARADIGM SHIFT

Is it possible for formal organizations to create demonstrable, measurable, holistic cultures that overarch and modulate the centrifugal forces of their multiple subcultures? While the impetus for creating a single "monistic" organization culture will most likely come from senior management, this holistic culture cannot be shaped and directed solely or even primarily by management. Here is where the paradigm shift must take place. According to Pascale:

Rapid rates of change, an explosion of new insights from the life sciences, and the insufficiency of the old-machine model to explain how business today really works have created a critical mass for a revolution in management thinking ... If I had to generalize, I'd say that the old rules of the game rested on a management method that I call "social engineering," which operates according to three premises. First, intelligence is located at the top; Leadership is the head, organization is the body. Second, change is predictable. That is, when you design a change effort, there's a reasonable degree of predictability and control. Third, there is the assumption of cascading intention. Once a course of action is determined, initiative flows from the top down, and the only trick is to communicate it and roll it out through the ranks (Webber, 2001, p. 132).

As an alternative to the old game rules, Pascale (Webber, 2001, p. 134) offers four principles of life – and business that explain how living organisms, including organizations, change and adapt:

• *Equilibrium is a precursor to death.* When a living system is in a state of equilibrium, it is less responsive to the changes that are occurring around it. It is most at risk when it feels most secure.

• *When threatened or when galvanized* by a compelling opportunity, living things move toward the edge of chaos. This condition evokes higher levels of mutation and experimentation and is more likely to result in fresh new solutions.

• *As living things move closer to the edge of chaos,* they have a tendency to self-organize, and new forms emerge from the turmoil. This property of life, called "self-organization and emergence," is a major source of innovation, creativity, and evolution.

• *Living systems cannot be directed along a linear path.* Unforeseen consequences are inevitable. The challenge is to learn how to disturb them in a manner that approximates the desired outcome and then to correct the course as the outcome unfolds.

The urgency with which organizations today undertake significant organizational change programs reflects the implicit recognition that "equilibrium is a precursor to death." During a planned change program, it is the role of leadership and professional management to clearly articulate an organization's position relative to its competition and trends in the market, to provide a vision of the organization's future, *and* to move the organization toward the edge of chaos. Pascale sees the edge of chaos, "a condition of relentless discomfort," not as the abyss, but "as the sweet spot for productive change" (Webber, 2001, p. 135). The role of organizational leadership here is to allow – without managerial control – for the emergence of new sources of innovation and creativity, to accept that the path of change will not be linear because unforeseen consequences are inevitable, and to incorporate the diversity of the organization toward constructive organizational change.

This is a significant redefinition of the roles of organizational leadership, management, and consultants, who too often have assumed that their job was to design the change program (in the back room) and then sell the program to 'the rest of' the organization. During implementation of a change program, an organization most effectively discovers and affirms its core values and guiding principles through dialogues with its multiple subcultures. As the various subcultures articulate their values and guiding principles through dialogues, they expose, and therefore can explore, their cultural assumptions. The optimal conditions for creating and sustaining this dialogue include:

• Open access to all pertinent information, both internal and external to the organization.

• Empowerment and autonomy, balanced with responsibility for the tota... system.

• A spirit of collaboration and trust.

• Full use of the organization's diversity during implementation of the planned change program.

When the subcultures successfully address and negotiate their differing cultura... assumptions, values and guiding principles, they are laying the foundation o... an overarching, holistic organizational culture. Hence, *the paradigm that create... lasting organizational change is a process of fostering the conditions fo... ongoing continuous change within a well-ordered, clearly articulated framework of core values and guiding principles that is nurtured and sustained by dialogue... with all organizational subcultures.*

This process acknowledges pluralism. In fact, much can be learned by consid... ering the governments of the U.S. and the newly emerging E.U. entity as usefu... models for the governance and management of today's pluralistic organizations While in both unions, there is agreement, *in principle*, about the necessity o... an overarching, holistic culture that subdues the centrifugal nature of th... multiple subcultural forces, the democratic governments of these nations do no... seek to eliminate or integrate the differentiation and fragmentation forces tha... are always at play in the cultures of both the U.S. and the E.U.

The processes that create an overarching culture and honor pluralism in a... organization are very complex and cannot be trivialized by the assumptions o... the integrated culture perspective. It becomes essential to bear in mind both th... differentiation and fragmentation culture perspectives. According to quantu... physics (Wheatley, 1999), and cultural anthropologists would agree, reality i... different for each of us, and so, to describe an organization is like trying t... describe a cloud in the sky. The description depends on our place and angl... of vision, and whether we are above or below, inside or outside of it. Thes... multiple perspectives are at the heart of organizational diversity, and thi... diversity creates the complexity *and* opportunities that must be reckoned wit... in organizational change efforts. Several axioms (Hamada, 1989) emerge fro... an awareness of the multiple perspectives that comprise organizational diversity

• An organization is a complex and heterogeneous entity, having differen... stakeholders who hold multiple values and attitudes.

• Organizational goals are never accepted or appreciated uniformly by organi... zational members.

• The degree of information sharing differs widely among members and acros... groups.

- The content and interpretation of organizational goals differ according to individual and group interests.
- Values, motivations and ideologies are often in competition or conflict among members of the organization.

The overarching culture is more of a holographic image (Senge, 1990). If a hologram (a three-dimensional image created by interacting light sources) is divided, each part, however small, shows the whole image intact. Likewise, when groups of people share a vision for a corporate culture, each individual and subculture sees a particular picture of the whole. But the component pieces of the hologram are not identical. Each represents the whole image from a different point of view. And when the pieces of a hologram are combined, the image becomes more intense, more lifelike. The holographic image of corporate culture exists within a pluralistic, diverse organization and serves to unite (not integrate), without destroying the differentiation or fragmentation cultural forces.

While leadership theory states that the duty of the organizational leader is to bridge the gap between the new vision and the organization's history and experience, in implementation, however, this is not a one-person job. Successes and failures in consulting experiences have revealed the value of proceeding very carefully through organizational change efforts while accepting the premise of chaos theory: order without predictability (Morgan, 1998; Wheatley, 1999; Pascale et al., 2000). According to Wheatley (1999), complexity can be generated out of very simple patterns. The function of organizational leadership is to make sure that patterns which form the holographic image are in place, in the forms of established principles, values, and guiding assumptions. The fundamental distinction here is that order is different from control.

For decades, traditional change strategies, ranging on a continuum from *force-coercion* to *rational persuasion* to *shared power* have demonstrated the corresponding rate of change from fast to slow, with the likely results ranging from temporary compliance to longer term internalization. So, for example, the force-coercion strategy toward an integrated culture perspective will produce rapid but short-lived change, while shared power, which takes a longer time, will tend to result in longer-term internalization. The application of chaos theory in organizational life is an extension of the shared power strategy. Acceptance of chaos theory during planned change means that all organizational stakeholders representing various subcultures, including management and consultants, make room for organizational order to evolve without being able to exactly predict or control it. When the leadership of an organization accepts the possibility of order without predictability and control, this communicates to organizational members that the 'playing field is level.' It says that the

organization will honor its unique diversity; it will recognize that no single subculture has all the answers; and it will appreciate that the best ideas for organizational effectiveness, change and innovation will emerge from multiple sources.

The preceding discussion has presented a paradigm that suggests an overarching corporate culture is like a hologram, where the whole can be regarded — intact — from different points of view. This paradigm acknowledges the importance of accepting both the differentiation and fragmentation cultural forces while utilizing the power of chaos theory (order without control) to create longer lasting organizational change in pluralistic organizations. This perspective offers a way to significantly reduce resistance to change; however, there is no magic that will cause the reality of resistance to change to disappear.

HOW DO YOU CREATE LASTING ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE? YOU MUST FIRST SLAY GRENDEL'S MOTHER

As stated at the outset, organizational change, whether focused on people, structure, processes, or technology, is inextricably linked with culture change. Cultural anthropologists remind us that rather than fixating on this "culture thing" as a lever for increasing organizational effectiveness, we should remember that the conservative, protective, reactive elements of culture probably more planned change programs than they advance (Baba, 1989). David Whyte (1994), author of *The Heart Aroused: Poetry and the Preservation of the Soul in Corporate America*, says that those conservative, protective, and reactive elements of culture that bury change programs are embedded in the fears of people, both individually and collectively. He asks how many managers or consultants have resolved a perceived difficulty or brought about a successful change effort on the first try. The reason, he explains, it is so difficult to implement lasting change, i.e. confront and successfully eliminate dysfunctional elements in organizational structure and processes at the first stroke, is because one must deal with the elements of consciousness and unconsciousness that continue to feed the established dynamics of an organization. Whyte uses the Old English story of Beowulf, as retold below, to illustrate his point.

Fifteen hundred years ago the anonymous author of the Old English story, Beowulf, entreated his listeners to risk looking below the surface of their daily existence, into the waters of the unconscious. Whyte describes Beowulf as a sixth century consultant who presents himself to Hrothgar, the King of Denmark, because the King has been having great difficulty with Grendel, a diabolical

swamp creature. In short order, Beowulf mortally wounds Grendel who then staggers back to die in the swamp. That night there is tremendous feasting and gift giving, but as Beowulf and his men sleep, something else comes from the swamp, fights off the best warriors and kills the closest friend and confidant of King Hrothgar: Grendel's mother. As Whyte says, the message in Beowulf's story is unsparing:

It is not the thing you fear that you must deal with, it is the mother of the thing you fear. The very thing that has given birth to the nightmare (p. 38).

Grendel, who did not like King Hrothgar's increased effectiveness, competitiveness, and prosperity, remains to this day as the expression of negative attitudes and behaviors toward change. *Grendel is the force, expressed as fear and resistance, which desires to prevent planned change.* This force is expressed by varied forms of resistance to change, some subtle, some overtly hostile. When Grendel is slain (i.e. when planned organizational change is implemented in spite of the forces of resistance), Grendel's mother then feels the loss of her offspring and she reacts by attacking those responsible. *Grendel's mother is vengeance, aroused by the dynamic of loss.* After the managers or consultants think they have resolved the perceived difficulty,

...late one night the phone rings and the plant manager tells them that something else just arose from the depths of managerial discontent and is destroying the production and purpose they thought they had (Whyte, 1994, p. 38). *Grendel's mother.*

While Joseph Campbell (1988) was speaking of the individual when he said that if one does not come to know the deeper mythic resonances that make up one's life, the mythic resonances will simply rise up and take over one's life, one could argue that the same holds true for organizational behavior: if the deeper mythic resonances that resound below the surface of the organization are not listened to, acknowledged, and dealt with, they will simply rise up and take over any planned change effort. One intent of this paper is to delve more deeply into the 'mythic resonances' that manifest as fear and resistance, and to show by example how they can impact planned change efforts. Eliminating dysfunctional structures and processes will not be successfully accomplished if these mythic resonances, including the dynamics of loss that arouse Grendel's mother, are not addressed. First, however, it is important to remember that mythic resonances, for example those that motivate political maneuverings, are always alive in organizations on any given day, even when an organization is not engaged in a planned change effort.

A BRIEF REVIEW OF 'NORMAL,' EVERYDAY ORGANIZATIONAL POLITICAL DYNAMICS

A non-political perspective can lead one to believe that employees will always behave in ways consistent with the interests of the organization. In contrast, however, a political view can explain much of what may seem to be irrational behavior in organizations. This is why it becomes so important to understand the anthropologists' perspective that organizations are complex societies writ small; they are heterogeneous entities, comprised of different subcultures that hold multiple values and attitudes (Baba, 1989). Anthropologists would advise us to regard organizational culture in terms of the political processes of social relationships from the viewpoints of individuals and subgroups. While this is a major departure from the culture integration perspective of an organization most often created by and for management, it is consistent with the organizational theory literature that provides multiple frames or images with which to regard organizations, for example, see Bolman and Deal (1984) and Morgan (1998). A political framework can help to explain, for instance why, even on a normal day and not in reaction to imminent organizational change, employees might choose to withhold information, restrict output, attempt to "build empires," publicize their successes, hide their failures, distort performance figures, and engage in activities that appear to be at odds with organizational goals for effectiveness and efficiency. Certain organizational structural and process factors (Ferris et al., 1989) not only contribute to the political behaviors of individuals and groups, but actually increase their natural political proclivities, including:

- Climate of low trust;
- Role ambiguity;
- Unclear performance evaluation systems;
- Zero-sum reward allocation practices;
- High pressures for performance;
- The structure of rewards and punishments;
- Organizational tolerance for risk vs. uncertainty avoidance.

Two other factors that may be less intuitively obvious than the above include acceptance of conflict and democratic decision-making. If an organization accepts conflict as inevitable and even necessary, it is more apt to formally or informally provide and support the necessary skills to make conflict a functional, as opposed to dysfunctional, organizational process. If democratic decision-making is becoming the cultural norm of an organization but is not fully

embraced by all managers and supervisors, the perceived loss of power and influence will politicize the behavior of those who feel threatened.

Remembering that many of the above dynamics are generally at work in the daily life of an organization increases appreciation for what can happen to these dynamics when an organization introduces a planned change program.

ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE AND THE DYNAMICS OF LOSS

When a planned change intervention is introduced, the senior management team responsible for the change program is focused on implementation; however, the rest of the organization is more or less focused on "me" issues. Here is when Grendel's mother emerges: she is the mother of all negative attitudes and behaviors toward change that are manifested as fear and resistance. For Grendel's mother, it is all about "me" issues. She comes out of the swamp to seek revenge, energized by the dynamics of loss (Grendel's mother) are manifested during implementation of planned change, for example:

- Perceived violation of deeply held values.
- Disconfirmation of the familiar self as known to oneself and to others.
- Loss of or threat to self-esteem and self-efficacy.
- Loss of confidence in one's inner locus of control.
- Loss of certainty about job security and income.
- Loss of confidence in the stability/predictability of one's external loci of control.
- Fear of the unknown, including increased ambiguity, uncertainty, loss of familiar and predictable sources and patterns of causality (how things are done) in organizational structures and processes.

Just as individuals can react negatively to planned change efforts and focus obsessively on "me" issues, so can groups or subcultures of the organization. All change means loss, and many sources of individual and group power and resources are inevitably threatened, changed, or lost through planned change efforts (Morgan, 1998, p. 163). Organizational change can be a frontal assault on established sources of reward, legitimate, or expert power, and directly affect who gets what, when, and how. Hence, planned change exacerbates normal manifestations of political behaviors because sources of power and resources are always altered through planned change efforts. What activates Grendel and Grendel's mother is the disruption of established political behaviors and the attendant dynamics of loss.

GRENDEL'S MOTHER AND THE DENIAL OF DEATH

Morgan suggests that we should regard the role of the unconscious in organizational life as a kind of "black hole," that can swallow and trap the energies of people (1998, p. 205). Certainly, organizational change impacts this black hole phenomenon by introducing feelings similar in construct to mourning a death. The "black hole" of unconsciousness created by organizational change can be further understood by examining the quest for symbolic immortality. Herein lies the most important clue for understanding Grendel's mother.

In a seminal work, The Denial of Death, for which he won the Pulitzer Prize, Ernest Becker (1973) reinterpreted the Freudian theory of repressed sexuality and linked fears to inadequacies, vulnerability, and mortality. Becker's work, interpreted through the organizational perspective of Morgan, enables us to understand organizations and much of organizational behavior in terms of a quest for symbolic immortality:

- In creating organizations, we create structures of activity that are larger than life and that often survive for generations.
- In becoming identified with such organizations, we ourselves find meaning and permanence.
- As we invest ourselves in our work, our roles become our realities, and as we objectify ourselves in the goods we produce or the money we make, we make ourselves visible and real to ourselves (Morgan, 1998, pp. 194–195).

In creating a world that can be perceived as objective and real, we affirm the concrete and real nature of our own existence. Thus, in joining with others in the creation of an organization of shared norms, beliefs, ideas, and practices, individuals and groups attempt to locate themselves in something larger and more enduring – in a quest for immortality. (Being a little less reverent, Becker actually refers to all symbolic monument building as "immortality schemes.") The senior management team and any others who have committed to the planned change effort may now perceive that they have created a new and even better immortality scheme, but many others in the organization will now focus on the "me" issues and mourn the loss of the familiar. While these "me" issues will certainly include immediate concerns about job security, income, and established performance routines, these issues are fed by the underground stream of fear about losing one's established sense of confidence, competence, and identity (i.e. one's "immortality scheme").

The fear and resistance to change (Grendel) that is expressed by individuals and groups during times of organizational change is heightened by the more or

less unconsciously perceived threat of destruction or death of an established quest for meaningful, purposeful life. This perspective provides a fuller appreciation of the dynamic force of Grendel's mother when she appears to wreak havoc and revenge during planned change efforts. Nothing less than the quest for symbolic immortality is truly at the heart of the mythic resonances that Campbell, Whyte, Becker, and Morgan, each in his own way, has written about.

THE ROLE OF THE CHANGE AGENT IN CREATING LASTING ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

Grendel and Grendel's mother – resistance to change and vengeance aroused by the dynamic of loss – are always lying in wait midst the sources of tension that exist when a complex, heterogeneous organization undergoes change. While dealing with Grendel, the force of Grendel's mother – lying below the surface – cannot be underestimated. There are additional lessons to be learned from the story of Beowulf about confronting Grendel's mother. What sorts of insights and courage does it take for change agents (whether managers or consultants) to dive below the surface of the presenting problems facing an organizational change effort and confront the mythic resonances, including the depths of fears and resistance of individuals, groups and subcultures in the organization? Whyte wonders what enabled Beowulf to go down into the lake – "surely Beowulf possessed no immunity from insecurity" (Whyte, 1994, p. 46). Beowulf was certainly armed with courage and wisdom, but so were all the great warriors who accompanied Beowulf to Denmark, and none of them was able to descend into the depths of that water to wrestle with Grendel's mother.

To arm himself, Beowulf is given the helmet of the king, and a great and famous sword, Hrunting, but as the story makes clear, these do not help him except to bolster his courage in entering. At this point Beowulf's power seems to have more to do with a process of *disarming* (Whyte, 1994, p. 46).

Beowulf finds that both the helmet of the king and the great sword are useless. Whyte suggests that the "glamorous but useless sword" may represent the attempt to rely inappropriately on technology at a crucial moment (p. 55). One could also see the helmet and sword as the "managementcentric" perspective on what organizational changes are needed and how to best implement them down through the organization. Once Beowulf is alone at the bottom of the lake, he is forced to throw away what he brought with him and wrestle barehanded with Grendel's mother.

Locked together in a death-like embrace, they tumble into her den, where Beowulf sees, glowing on the wall, an unknown but marvelous sword. He breaks the chain on its hilt, and with a sudden blow, kills Grendel's mother with the glowing blade (Whyte, 1994, p. 54).

Meanwhile Beowulf's friends wait at the water's edge for a very long time and finally give him up for dead. Similarly, when an organization goes through radical restructuring, those involved may wonder if it will ever end. The temptation is to not follow-through, to give up and revert to old ways, or to stand on management prerogative and cancel the change program out of impatience and frustration.

The important point of the Beowulf story which Whyte brings out is that "Whatever is needed for the moment of truth in those dire, deep places seems brought to view only on our arrival at the very bottom" (p. 56).

> Beowulf's final struggle and grasping of the luminous sword (which he finds in the lair of Grendel's mother at the bottom of the lake) must be seen as the vital and necessary ability to shift shapes at the crucial moment and grasp the opportunity offered. Traditionally rehearsed speeches fail to win agreements during difficult negotiations. The prepared speeches, talismanically, like Hrunting, may take you down, into the thick of it, to the monster that lies between you and the other side, but once there, you must rely on the gritty truth you pluck from the very walls of the meeting room to bring the wrestling to a conclusion (Whyte, 1994, p. 56).

How can we relate the lessons learned from Beowulf's experience to disarming the mythic resonances that manifest as resistance, in the service of creating lasting organizational change? Whyte tells us that, like Beowulf, change agents today must have the courage to dive open-mindedly into the depths of the mythic resonances of the organization to find and listen to the gritty truths harbored by individuals and the diverse and fragmented organizational subcultures, and while there to shift shapes and grasp the opportunities offered. Sometimes in working with these gritty truths – in the spirit of seeking order without control – the shifting shapes and opportunities come together in ways that facilitate progress toward implementing the change program.

However, while in the depths of the mythic resonances of the organization, the change agent also needs the courage to realistically appraise the power of the restraining forces that oppose change and the "vengeance" that will be unleashed. Here we can learn from former Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, who articulated and practiced realism in politics during the cold war era (Fukuyama, 1992, p. 246). (For earlier formulations of realism in politics, see Niebuhr, 1932; Morgenthau, 1985.) Kissinger advocated a dispassionate balancing of power (the gritty truth) that was free of considerations of ideology (imported from the surface), or revenge. His model of power politics (realpolitik) sought first of all to maintain a balance of power; secondly the model posited that friends and enemies ought to be chosen primarily on the basis of their power, rather than on the basis of ideology; and third, that it was more important to look at capabilities (for war) rather than intentions (of peace) (Kissinger,

1982). His strategy for creating international stability directly relates to creating lasting organizational change, which also requires paying attention to the balance and politics of power.

A realpolitik perspective on organizational dynamics provides an assessment of the strength of Grendel (resistance), the larger Grendel's mother (vengeance). Ideology (lip service in support of change) should not be accepted at face value without an analysis of real capabilities to successfully prevent change. Following this assessment, there needs to be a realpolitik strategy that will marshal the energy and resources of the organization towards the creation of organizational change. The intent is first to maintain a balance of power that enables the different and fragmented subcultures to co-exist, and yet to create change. Sometimes it is possible to introduce a planned change program, that may alter but not fundamentally disrupt the balance of power of individuals and subcultures in the organization. However, if the weight of the individuals, subcultures, and mythic resonances of the organization that would resist the change process exceed the forces for change, then "war" is a more likely outcome than the relatively smooth implementation of a change program. When it becomes apparent that in order to implement the change program, a shift in organizational power dynamics is inevitable, then power bases, as opposed to ideology, and the capabilities for war (opposition to the change efforts), i.e. the strength of Grendel and Grendel's mother, must be realistically appraised.

In actual planned organizational change programs, of course, sometimes Beowulf wins and sometimes Beowulf loses. Sometimes the gritty truths which lie submerged in established organizational dynamics reveal personal agendas, alliances, and mentalities that are simply too longstanding and entrenched to be changed. Period. The following examples from organizational development fieldwork illustrate a failed change effort and a successful change program. Each example will be considered in light of the consultants' subsequent learnings about chaos theory, resistance to change, and the role of the change agent.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM AN R&D LAB

In the mid-1990s, the consultants were invited to work with the newly appointed vice president of a 125-person R&D lab in a division of a major corporation in the chemical coatings industry. Prior to the hiring of the new vice president, a combination of events had created considerable tension and low morale in the lab, including: (a) a long traumatic period of indecision about whether or not to relocate the lab to another state, closer to corporate headquarters; (b) the recent dismantling of the central research function and the co-location of

research within the existing development facility; and (c) the deterioration of the physical plant, resulting from a lack of investment in the facility during the period of indecision about the lab location.

At the same time, there was growing dissatisfaction in this division with the ability of the R&D lab to respond to competitive challenges. Just a few years previously, the central research function of this division moved into the facility that had been fully occupied by the development group. In a very real sense, development had to make room for research. The directors of research and development did not like each other personally or respect each other professionally. There were no dialogues between the two groups; no joint problem analysis or problem solving. Development was focused on the customer and did not refer fundamental technical problems to research. Research operated more as an academic research lab and paid little attention to problems in the field. Eventually, the continued poor performance of products in the field got the serious attention of the president of the division, and there were also corporate concerns about the slowdown in rate of growth and profits. As a result of these concerns, a new vice president of R&D was recruited from a competitor because of his proven capabilities to effectively manage the research and development functions. He was charged with the task of solving problems with existing products and accelerating the development of new products.

The new vice president faced several major challenges within the R&D lab:

- Overcoming the denial of some of his directors and managers and convincing them (with the ample, available data which had been ignored) that there were, in fact, severe problems with existing products and that competitors were moving ahead more rapidly in the development of new products.
- Creating support for a flatter, empowered organization and a radical structural change involving the effective integration of research and development professionals and technicians in product-focused teams.
- Introducing a more rigorous scientific discipline (root cause analysis and structure/property relationships) into the product development process.
- Increasing the lab's capability to resolve longstanding problems with products in the marketplace and reduce new product development cycles by half.

Shortly after the new vice president was hired, the division level human resource director acquainted him with the consultants' earlier survey of the lab. The vice president saw the survey as an opportunity to become data-driven in approaching this organizational change program and he then invited the consultants to participate in the design and implementation of the change process. The need for major strategic and structural changes in the lab was fully recognized and

supported by the division president (who had been directly responsible for bringing in this vice president). All conditions seemed right for an accelerated change process. The program had sanction from the top, and with the new VP, the lab had an enthusiastic, charismatic on-site leader, as well as some very capable directors, a bright, experienced and energetic workforce, and highly visible technical challenges to stimulate a sense of urgency and focus for the organization.

Given the lack of integration between research and development, the vice president's approach was to create cross-functional teams comprised of research scientists, development professionals, and technicians. Much of the literature tends to suggest that creating effective teams is both a rational and linear process (Gladstein, 1984; Hackman, 1987; Campion et al., 1993; Dyer, 1995; Mohrman et al., 1995; Guzzo & Dickson, 1996). In this situation, however, while there was an overlay of rationality, the reality of organizational change had to do more with power, competition, personal agendas, and complexities driven by individual and subcultural values. The following discussion explores some of the complex human dynamics of this project, which was ongoing over a period of eighteen months.

As the planned change effort got underway, the Ph.D. research scientists resisted the shift toward the creation of teams of research and development personnel. At the outset, members of this subculture valued their autonomy and special status within the lab over the new vision of a flatter, team-based organization. Their resistance was reinforced by the director of research, who publicly supported the change toward cross-functional teams, but privately counseled his scientists to continue to work independently on unapproved projects. The attitude of the director of research offers a figurative illustration of Grendel's mother: the team-based planned change effort was put in place on top of this director's fears and resistance, on the assumption that his resistance would disappear in the face of a rational socio-technical intervention. However, the 'mother' of the director's fears, the dynamic of loss, was not effectively dealt with. Or maybe it could not be dealt with; a harsh reality and consequence of many organizational change efforts is a certain "cadaver rate," i.e. the elimination of those people whose values, attitudes, and behaviors are deemed not in the best interest of the change effort. In this case the director was asked to leave, and he returned to college teaching with a generous severance package.

With the loss of their research director, issues among some of the Ph.D. scientists continued to fester. The consultants were invited to meet with them and facilitate their discussion, which led to a formal set of recommendations for the vice president. The director of development and his managers, who constituted another group resisting organizational change, were vocally critical

of the consultants' "legitimating" this group by agreeing to listen to them. Other organizational members, however, recognized and appreciated the message that there would be forums for dissenting opinions. The consultants' intent was to model processes for creating order without control. In this instance, the direct invitation to communicate concerns and recommendations to the vice president enabled the scientists to surface and examine their fears, professional values, and status needs. A series of ongoing structured dialogues gave the scientists the degrees of freedom to explore the potential of their role in these teams. The scientists soon discovered that by giving up some autonomy there was more to be gained in terms of increased depth and breadth of technical experience by applying their skills through the cross-functional teams. They discovered new ways of increasing the value and recognition of their contributions to improved product performance, and they helped to further articulate the lab's new guiding principles. The slaying of Grendel's mother in this situation came about by listening to and, in a sense, disarming the scientists' objections that were based on their perceived loss of status. The 'glowing sword' was discovered through the consultants' discussions with the scientists about their status issue; this status issue (the sword) was then turned toward Grendel's mother by enabling the scientists to appreciate that their value-added contributions to the cross-functional teams would actually enhance their status considerably.

Working with the development technicians offered a refreshing change. These people had long chafed under the command style of their managers, and they were more than ready for empowerment and change. When they were given the opportunity to help identify new parameters for product performance, they stepped forward in many proactive ways. They redefined their role and took several initiatives to enhance the effectiveness and accuracy of their work in order to meet the new standards and to increase their overall contributions to the lab's goals.

One of the biggest issues in this change process was centered around the director of development and a few of the middle managers on the development side. From the beginning of this change process, these few development middle managers communicated their dissatisfaction and lack of support in both direct and indirect ways. They found sympathy for their position with the director of development, who later revealed his disappointment about not having been offered the vice president position. At first there were open discussions of the managers' issues and concerns, but when it became apparent that the vice president was not going to change direction, this small group of managers became less vocal. One of the most serious mistakes in perception and judgment made in this planned change project happened here. When the middle managers became less vocal, the mistaken assumption was made that they had been

mollified or even convinced of the need for change. In fact, their fears, anger, and resistance had gone underground, and the vengeance of Grendel's mother lay in wait.

There were some real successes in this project, especially with the integration of development professionals and technicians and the Ph.D. scientists in cross-functional teams. Most of the technical difficulties that had plagued the division's main product line since product introduction were resolved. Improved results were beginning to show in the marketplace and there was every reason to believe that the financial picture would positively reflect the changes. While many elements of organizational structure and process were successfully changed, the project was aborted before the politics of the development manager and middle manager subcultures could be effectively dealt with. The power bases of the development director and his managers were directly threatened by the movement to the cross-functional teams. Not only did they experience loss of power through a dismantling of their established political modes of operating, they also saw a disintegration of the foundations of their well-established jobs – their very careers (symbolic immortality quests). Because the fears and concerns of the development director and his managers were not adequately dealt with, Grendel's mother was unleashed to wreak havoc in the organization.

Around this time in the project, the director of development grew very busy behind the vice president's back. The division president who had hired the vice president of the R&D lab and been very supportive of his change plan left the organization. The new division president had a different agenda and did not like teams or consultants. On many occasions the development director spoke privately with the new president of the division and even called for the vice president's resignation by saying, "Either he goes or I go." This statement, in effect, brought all the issues to a head. While the development director and middle managers were unable to engage directly in a constructive exploration of issues, they now went so far as to institute a "mutiny" by calling for the vice president's resignation.

Interestingly, this was an organization that did not support, encourage, or accept conflict. Lacking the skills to engage effectively in functional conflict, a mutiny would seem to be the only way to go. The directors and managers of the lab were uncomfortable with conflict and did not have good confrontational skills, and during a 'nightmare' of a retreat, they successfully resisted the consultants' efforts to bring this issue into the open. As noted earlier, the absence of an acceptance of conflict increases political behavior. It was quite evident in this situation that the development director and his managers used avoidance and political power to undermine and cancel the consultants'

initiatives to open constructive dialogues. There was a related learning as the change effort sought to introduce democratic decision making in the team context. While this meant empowerment for the lab technicians and was embraced as long needed and overdue change, it directly threatened the power base of the managers and development director. Their reaction was a predictable increase in political behaviors, including more gamesmanship in all meetings.

What happened after the development director called for the vice president's resignation demonstrated a real paradox in organizational life. Those involved could sense the vengeful anger of Grendel's mother and then the gloating after the mutiny. The development manager assumed that he had clearly succeeded in bringing down the vice president (Grendel's mother took a victim). While the new division president's style, which had encouraged case building against the vice president, created the opportunity for an open mutiny, what the mutineers did not recognize is that they had violated the code of traditional, conservative, hierarchical organizations, which holds that one cannot challenge the authority of a superior. There were consequences after the development director called for the vice president's resignation: the organization took deliberate and careful actions that resulted in the transfer of the development director and one development manager, and the planned retirement of another development manager. A third and fourth development manager voluntarily left the company.

No one will know how this situation might have evolved if the change process had been allowed to proceed. Within about six months of the "mutiny," the new division president called for the vice president's resignation. The generally understood reason was that the two men were incompatible philosophically and stylistically. An even less charitable interpretation is that the president, who was related by marriage to the CEO, had a self-serving agenda and the power to bend the organization to his will. Most of the other directors left shortly after the vice president departed. While a few of the teams were left intact, they were more directly supervised by management. Some three years later, the consultants were told that "the footprint" of this change effort remained; however, as fewer and fewer of the original employees remain, there is less collective memory of the experience.

Through a post hoc analysis of this consulting experience, several examples have been identified that illustrate key dimensions of the paradigm presented in this paper.

The Use of Chaos Theory: Creating Order as Opposed to Control

From the beginning, the vice president openly shared his desire to create cross-functional teams to resolve product performance problems, but there were no

efforts to establish an integrated culture. In fact, he chose to take the lab "to the edge of chaos" in order to create new opportunities for innovation. He was quite open about valuing the different strengths of the research and development groups, and he looked for and invited new ways to empower the lab "associates," as he called the employees. With the involvement of his directors, the steering committee, and consultants, he sought to create a guided but nonlinear approach to planned change. Ironically, his efforts to create unity around a new mandate without controlling the implementation process flew in the face of the established culture and dynamics of the lab, which was extremely command and control oriented. The two examples discussed earlier, illustrate how the change program successfully used the order without control approach.

Diving Below the Surface to Learn Gritty Truths and Reckon with Grendel's Mother

The consultants conducted experiential team-building sessions with each team of research scientists and development technicians. This gave the consultants an opportunity to directly observe the command-and-control style of the middle managers, who were now assigned the job of team facilitators. In a follow-up activity, the consultants met with each team without their team facilitator and during these meetings, several teams identified serious problems with their team facilitators. These conversations touched directly on the mythic resonances of power and control held by the development director and his managers that underlay the strong established culture of this lab. Team members spoke quite openly and frankly with the consultants about their frustrations and in a couple of instances said they had been advised by the managers about what they should and should not say to the consultants. While the consultants were successful in getting at the gritty truth with the teams, there was a price to pay. Once the consultants encroached on the managers' territory and talked directly with their team members, the battle with Grendel's mother began in earnest.

As a pet project he could call his own, the lab HR manager decided to organize the secretaries into a team with the added responsibility of sharing the job of receptionist. Previously they worked independently and each was secretary to one of the directors. The secretaries mouthed the ideology of change but their passive-aggressive behavior showed they were dead-set against it. Hostilities on both sides (management and the secretaries) were growing, so one of the consultants was asked to 'get to the bottom of the problem.' The gritty truths that emerged had to do with the loss of status and the complete role ambiguity brought about by the creation of a team of interchangeable

secretaries. The secretaries wanted to return to their former arrangement of one secretary per director and to be allowed to figure out the scheduling of the receptionist's duties. Interestingly, when the rest of the lab learned that the secretaries had disbanded as a team, the secretaries were given a lot of grief about not being able to be team players; they then decided to create a team and named themselves the "Desk Jockeys."

Assuming the Role of Beowulf – or Not

In the case of the secretaries, it was relatively easy to explore the nature of the resistance that lay below the surface. However, this was not at all the situation with the director of development. During a team building session with the vice president and his directors, one moment the group task was well underway. The next moment the director of development grabbed all the materials the group was working with, moved alone to another table and began to complete the project himself. While it was utterly astounding to the group that he chose to take over and subvert the group process, it was even more unbelievable that not a single one of his colleagues, including the vice president and directors, said anything to him. As it turned out, his solution failed, which heightened the tension in the situation. The consultants momentarily considered confronting the issue and really going the full distance to probe this man's resentment and resistance; however, they lacked the requisite courage in that very public forum to risk the hostility and embarrassment of the only African-American in the group. The moment passed as though nothing unusual had happened. Sometimes one chooses in the moment to stay on the surface because the risks of doing otherwise seem unbearably high. In fact, this incident was an early warning signal that major divisive resonances were rumbling below the surface.

Over time it grew very clear that the R&D lab was embedded in an organization that would not deal openly with conflict and power politics. Under these circumstances, compounded by the arrival of the new president, it became inevitable that events played out as they did. With the change in presidents, a realpolitik appraisal of the situation would have re-evaluated the enhanced power base of those who resisted the change, weighed their real capabilities to continue the resistance, explored if, in fact, there was a possible course of action to proactively deal with the power dynamics . . . and then concluded that there was no stopping Grendel's mother. Here it was quite clear that if Grendel's mother could not be slain, there would be no lasting organizational change.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE UNIONIZED FOOD SERVICE DEPARTMENT OF A HOSPITAL

SUSAN L. MANRING

A successful experience involved a collaborative union-management-employee project within a 140-person food service department of a hospital. In the mid-1990s the AFSCME Union threatened to refuse to sign the labor contract unless a third party consultant was brought in to bring about needed changes in the line management and supervision of the food service group. The consultants were then brought on board to work with the food service group, including managers, employees, and union representatives (Manring & Brailsford, 2001).

An initial survey of the food service employees revealed major communication problems with managers and supervisors, along with high levels of stress and low employee morale. From the hospital's senior management perspective, there were two additional needs within the food service group:

(1) To re-establish a mission and vision, focusing on patient care, cost effectiveness, and quality of services; and
(2) To overcome resistance to change relating to quality and productivity improvements.

The primary objective of the project focused on empowerment of the workforce to participate fully with management in the creation and maintenance of a work environment that was conducive to healthy relationships and continuous improvement. The stated goal was increased service excellence. To further clarify, the point was stressed that this intervention was a collaborative partnership involving the union, management, and employees. It was not a "management-driven, efficiency-focused re-engineering project."

At the outset, the nature of this intervention was very critical to its acceptance by the food service employees. Attitudes toward management were so sour that when the director of facilities tried to shape the project as a re-engineering effort, the employees said, in effect, "Hell no, we won't go." The message could not have been clearer: in this collaborative planned change effort, the pace (incremental vs. radical change) had to be adapted to fit the readiness of individuals and groups to move forward into uncharted territory. As shown in the R & D illustration, if organizational change is perceived as too threatening, the dynamics of loss and vengeance (Grendel's mother) are activated to cause great disruptions and destruction.

A steering committee was created to work with the consultants. The committee included four food service employees, the acting director of the food

service group, the hospital union president, the regional AFSCME Union director, and a hospital human resources representative. The steering committee reported regularly to the administrative director of facilities services in the hospital. The steering committee mission was "to guide, supervise, and review the process of quality improvement through continued employee, union, and management collaborations and team-based problem solving."

The task teams, which were built around natural work groups comprised of food service employees, became the primary vehicles for organizational change. The employee task teams included groups of cooks, bakers, cafeteria cashiers, dish room staff, porters, and the patient tray line employees. While the food service department as a whole represented a distinct subculture in the hospital, within the department, each of the above teams was a very distinctive subculture, and there were many intergroup conflicts. The managers of the food service group comprised another team and there was ongoing developmental work with this group. Supervisory skills training was tailored for the needs of the managers and several were moved into other areas of the operation where they did not directly supervise people. One manager, who was absolutely unable to adapt to the changes, was offered early retirement and a good benefits package.

Over five years after the departure of the consultants and the departures and replacements of the food service director and director of facilities, this union, management, and employee partnership maintains its commitment to continuous improvement and service excellence. Union grievances filed against the food service group had peaked at 42% of the total number filed by all unionized service areas of the hospital before this planned change effort was undertaken. That percentage of food service grievances has steadily dropped every year since then to 11% in 2000. Another positive indicator was that in July 1999 the union ratified the new contract with a vote of 70%. This was notable for two reasons: (1) many parts of the contract were actual "takeaways" which the hospital needed due to the healthcare economic situation; and (2) the previous (1995) contract did not pass the first time and barely passed the second time.

Employee involvement to this degree in a planned change effort may be unusual in a union setting, and this hospital was fortunate to have the full support of the AFSCME Union. Two primary elements contributed to the success of this project:

(1) The need for change was clearly felt by all parties (the union, management, and employees).
(2) From the outset, the nature of this collaborative project ensured that the approach would be realistic. Often employee involvement planned change programs simply overlay an existing organizational structure with new

cooperative responsibilities and dogma. Here, the employees made it clear that a re-engineering effort with the attendant cultural changes would not be acceptable, i.e. the planned change effort was never allowed to become "managementcentric." By virtue of its comprehensive nature, this union-management-employee strategic planning partnership was able to create a plan for a realistic jointly designed, jointly supported project that over time did, in fact, significantly reconstruct the food service group.

Reflections on a Successful Project

This project provides a successful illustration of the use of chaos theory (order without control) in a planned change program. The task teams were given the freedom to go "to the edge of chaos" in this guided yet nonlinear change process. Unlike the R&D lab, the food service group was able to create a holistic culture that overarched and modulated the multiple subcultural forces. The new holo-gram of cultural values and guiding principles was created through structured dialogue processes with the steering committee, management, and the work teams. There was no 'managementcentric' control. From a realpolitik perspec-tive, those who had the power potentially to subvert the change process were among the most positive participants. The dynamics of loss were successfully managed, and the benefits of change were clearly understood. The steering committee provided a well-paced, guided process (symbolic immortality quest) that was accepted by management, the union, and the work teams. Years beyond the time when either the consultants or the directors could take credit, this department remains committed to ongoing continuous change.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Almost fifteen years ago, Ray Stata of Analog Devices said the rate at which organizations learn may become the only sustainable source of competitive advantage (1989). In the years since, his statement has grown prophetic. The importance of organizational learning is not just for stable times: it becomes even more critical during implementation of planned change programs, when change and learning may be happening at warp speed. Establishing order without control as the underlying vehicle for creating lasting organizational change allows for the evolution of innovation and builds on the premise of the learning organiza-tion that stresses the importance of a non-hierarchical approach to shared lead-ership and involvement (Goh, 1998). Furthermore, establishing order without control is an essential way of facilitating organizational learning that allows for

self-organizing (Pascale et al., 2000) toward new organizational structures and processes.

Human beings are designed for learning (Senge, 1990), and organizational change that incorporates the wisdom and learning capabilities of employees is compatible with the nature and expectations of both the more highly educated and the more street-wise constituencies of today's workforce. People at all levels of organizations have acquired attitudes of disenchantment, skepticism, or cynicism about the intentions and even the effectiveness of organizational leaders. In this climate, there is less and less chance of change that is driven top-down being successful, in part, because there is so much less mythology around exceptional leaders who have the capability and credibility to marshal the loyal troops and successfully implement planned change. In fact, corporate responses to global competition and increased economic pressures have taught the U.S. workforce – at all organizational levels – that it is naïve to offer loyalty to an organization in exchange for security.

While an organization may no longer be able to ask employees for loyalty, since it can no longer guarantee security, an organization does need the com-mitment of its workforce toward the principles, values, and vision of the organization. Approaches to organizational change that work creatively with the intellectual capital of organizational members offer an effective way to increase organizational commitment (Senge, 1990). On the surface, this does not sound much different from what Argyris wrote in 1970: that valid information, free choice, and internal commitment are the cornerstones of successful change. However, the diverse and skeptical nature of today's pluralistic workforce and the fragile contexts of both the U.S. and global economies have made the implementation of planned change considerably more problematic. What remains truer today than ever is that organizational flexibility and adaptability is critical to organizational survival and competitiveness (see Argyris & Schon, 1996).

While the paradigm discussed here offers an approach to organizational change that is compatible with the diverse and pluralistic nature of today's organizations and is in tune with the level of awareness of today's workforce, it does not necessarily guarantee lasting organizational change, which depends on the nature and forces of resistance. It is also essential to slay Grendel's mother in order to create lasting change. This will mean casualties. Implementing planned change is not for the faint-hearted: it requires courage without illusions, and it may be a waste of time if the new vision cannot be calibrated against existing assumptions, values, and power balances. Change agents can play a valuable third party, 'realpolitik' role in helping organization leadership assess the mythic resonances of the organization as well as the consequences of de-stabilizing existing balances of power and creating a new

power balance. The new balance of power would account for actual capabilities to resist and defeat planned change, rather than just relying on stated intentions to support the change effort.

For further research, it would be invaluable to learn from the experiences of change agents who undertake planned change programs within the paradigm described here. The essential elements would include:

- Creating a holographic image of the essential values and vision of the organization to provide unity.
- Utilizing the power of chaos theory to establish order rather than control "at the edge of chaos" around implementation of the planned change program.
- Engaging with the differentiated, fragmented subcultures of the organization in the spirit of pluralism without seeking to create an integrated culture.
- Diving below the surface ideologies and assumptions to explore the gritty truths of the organization and its members and to disarm the mythic resonances.
- Enacting the role of Beowulf with courage as well as a realpolitik awareness of the power politics of the organization.
- Being willing to address resistance to change and slay Grendel's mother by confronting and effectively eliminating the manifestations and sources of vengeance aroused by the dynamics of loss during the change process.

And lastly, accepting that there will be casualties, and asking one's heart if the values and objectives of the planned change are worthy of the career price that some organizational members will pay.

NOTE

1. The author was one of the two consultants who worked on these two OD projects. The other consultant, Walter H. Griggs, Ph.D., is deceased.

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